

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7431

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

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CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

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CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 14592

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCENE HEATS UP AGAIN

REF: BEIRUT 14552 (1445Z)

1. SUMMARY: KARAME AND OTHERS SHARPLY CRITICIZED CHAMOUN AND FRANGIE AT YESTERDAY'S SESSION OF NATIONAL DIALOGUE COM-

MITTEE. DIALOGUE BROKE UP SHORTLY AFTER CONVENING WITH CHAMOUN ABSENT. PARLIAMENT SESSION TODAY MAY BRING FURTHER FIREWORKS. KATAEB EMERGING, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, AS "MODERATE" PARTY COMPARED TO CHAMOUN'S NATIONAL LIBERALS, WHICH TAKING CONSIDERABLE FLACK FOR ROLE IN LATEST FIGHTING. STRIFE IN CAPITAL CONTINUES. COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY LIGHT. COUVE DE MURVILLE MAKING FURTHER ROUNDS AS ONLY FEW DAYS REMAIN IN CURRENT PHASE OF HIS MISSION. END SUMMARY.

2. PREMIER KARAME CONTINUED TO GIVE VENT TO HIS RENEWED PESSIMISM DURING AND AFTER YESTERDAY'S SESSION OF THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE. HE ATTACKED INTERIOR MINISTER CHAMOUN AND PRES FRANGIE, SAYING HE COULD DO NOTHING IN THE FACE OF THEIR HOSTILE ATTITUDE. SESSION WAS MARKED BY CONSIDERABLE BITTERNESS ON PART OF SEVERAL MEMBERS, AS ABSENCE OF CHAMOUN PROVOKED SAEB SALAM AND RAYMOND EDDE TO WALK OUT WHILE ALSO DENOUNCING CHAMOUN AND PRES FRANGIE, ALLEGING THEY WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR LATEST FLARE-UP OF FIGHTING. WHEN CONTACTED AND URGED TO ATTEND, CHAMOUN PLEADED PRIOR COMMITMENTS TO MEETINGS ON SECURITY SITUATION. DIALOGUE COMMITTEE BROKE UP SHORTLY AFTER CONVENING, WITH NO DATE SET FOR NEXT SESSION.

3. POLITICAL ATTENTION NOW FOCUSING ON MEETING OF PARLIAMENT TODAY. KARAME AND CHAMOUN ARE THERE AND SESSION CURRENTLY UNDERWAY. WE HAVE NO CONCRETE WORD YET ON DEBATE, BUT KARAME WAS REPORTEDLY PREPARING TO "REVEAL THE WHOLE TRUTH BEHIND THE CRISIS" IN THE CHAMBER.

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4. AN ANOMALY OF YESTERDAY'S DIALOGUE SESSION WAS RELATIVE FRIENDLINESS DISPLAYED BY KARAME AND OTHERS TOWARD KATAEB LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL. CONCENTRATING THEIR WRATH ON CHAMOUN'S NATIONAL LIBERALS FOR PROMINENT PART PLAYED IN THE RECENT CLASHES, MOSLEM PARTICIPANTS APPARENTLY FOUND KATAEB COMPARATIVELY MODERATE. FOR HIS PART, GEMAYEL RESPONDED BY PLAYING UP IMPORTANCE OF THE COMMITTEE. KATAEB

POLITBURO LATER ISSUED A CONCILIATORY STATEMENT URGING AN END TO "IDEOLOGICAL QUARRELS". THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF LEBANESE FACTIONAL POLITICS HAS, TEMPORARILY AT LEAST, MADE KATAEB LOOK LIKE CENTRISTS. HAWK-DOVE DEBATE INSIDE KATAEB PROBABLY ALSO A FACTOR, WITH DOVE ARGUMENT EVIDENTLY ON TOP FOR TIME BEING. PRESS REPORT OF ARMED CLASH LAST EVENING BETWEEN KATAEB AND NATIONAL LIBERAL MILITAMEN AT HAZMIEH ADDS FURTHER INCONGROUS NOTE TO THIS DEVELOPMENT. CLASH WAS APPARENTLY MINOR AND AROSE FROM DISPUTE OVER A ROADBLOCK.

5. SITUATION ON THE GROUND REMAINS ROUGHLY SAME AS DURING PAST SEVERAL DAYS, THOUGH REDUCTION IN LEVEL OF CLASHES NOTICEABLE IN CERTAIN AREAS. THERE WERE OUTBREAKS LAST NIGHT (NOV 24-25) IN SEVERAL "SUBURBAN" QUARTERS. NABAA AND SIN EL-FIL WERE THE SCENE OF THE MOST INTENSE FIGHTING. THE HIGHER COORDINATION COMMITTEE MET YESTERDAY AND WILL MEET AGAIN TODAY IN AN EFFORT TO DAMPEN THE STRIFE IN THE CAPITAL. MEANWHILE, SITUATION IN TRIPOLI-ZGHORTA AREA IS REPORTED TENSE WITH KIDNAPPINGS ON INCREASE.

6. COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY AND TRAFFIC ARE LIGHT THROUGHOUT BEIRUT. BANKS REMAIN CLOSED. GOVERNMENT LAST WEEK ANNOUNCED THAT SCHOOLS IN CAPITAL WERE TO OPEN TODAY; HOWEVER, NONE DID SO. RADIO OVER WEEKEND ANNOUNCED TRUCKS BRINGING IRAQI DONATION OF FOODSTUFFS WERE ARRIVING IN BEIRUT. DISTRIBUTION, APPARENTLY LIMITED TO MOSLEM AREAS, OF RICE, SUGAR, SOAP AND OLIVE OIL HAS BEGUN. PREVIOUSLY THERE WERE REPORTS OF SIMILAR IRAQI DONATIONS BEING DISTRIBUTED IN TRIPOLI.

7. DESPITE CONTINUING SECURITY RELAPSE, COUVE DE MURVILLE YESTERDAY PURSUED HIS ROUNDS. HE MET WITH HARD-LINING LEADER OF MARONITE MONKS CHARBEL KASSIS, WITH A GREEK ORTHODOX ECCLESIASTICAL DELEGATION, AND WITH SHIITE AND CONFIDENTIAL

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SUNNI REPRESENTATIVES. HE IS EXPECTED TO WIND UP HIS FACT-FINDING MISSION IN A FEW DAYS, AFTER WHICH HE MAY VISIT SEVERAL ARAB CAPITALS AND THEN JUDGE WHAT ROLE HE MAY PLAY IN A PROJECTED SECOND PHASE OF HIS MISSION. GODLEY

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